

PKR calls for end to post-polls conflict, moots bipartisan engagement
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PETALING JAYA, May 24 — As the Najib administration widens its security dragnet on opposition supporters, PKR called for an end today to the widespread conflict over the results of Election 2013, urging instead for dialogue between all warring parties.

PKR deputy president Azmin Ali noted the party's indignation at Barisan Nasional's (BN) return to power despite losing the popular vote, but said the people's welfare should be prioritised above partisan politics.

He stopped short, however, of urging an end to the series of "Black 505" rallies nationwide, saying organising or attending peaceful assemblies is the constitutional right of every Malaysian citizen.

But there is a need to move forward with plans to develop the nation, the Gombak MP said, noting that one way is through bipartisan engagement.

"If we declare our intention to serve the people, to show patriotism... then we need to seek common ground to bring political development to Malaysia," he said in his speech at the opening of the PKR Youth and Wanita wings 9th national congress here.

"It is our responsibility not to allow the 51-47 atmosphere lead us to a stalemate or political impasse... unending disputes and conflict," he said, referring to the popular vote score between BN and PR at the polls.

"I think all parties need to have the moral courage to create political dialogue and engagement across the political divide," he said.

PR leaders have been protesting the results of Election 2013, which saw BN returned to power despite losing the popular vote.

Due to the uneven dispersal of votes in numerous constituencies across Malaysia, which PR has labelled unfair gerrymandering, BN emerged victors with just over 47 per cent of the popular vote to PR's 51 per cent by snapping up 133 federal seats or 60 per cent of the 222 seats contested.

The polls outcome triggered the string of "Black 505" protests nationwide as indignant opposition leaders and voters rallied against BN's return to power despite failing to win the majority number of votes cast.

But the newly-sworn in BN government immediately moved to flex its muscles, mounting a nationwide clampdown that has seen the arrests of more than 20 people and the confiscation of thousands of opposition party newspapers.

Among the first to face charges was PKR's communications director Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, who was hauled to court for allegedly contravening the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011 in organising the mammoth PR rally at the Kelana Jaya Stadium on May 8.

A spate of arrests followed soon after as the police widened its dragnet, hauling in key

opposition leaders and activists like Dr Chen Man Hin, Chua Tian Chang, Tamrin Ghafar, Haris Ibrahim, Thomas Su, Ong Kian Ming and student leader Adam Adli.

Speaking at a press conference later, Azmin repeated that his call for bipartisan engagement and dialogue did not mean that he no longer supports the "Black 505" rallies.

"That is a separate issue. We will continue to support the rallies because we have seen in our observations that there was electoral fraud during the process of the polls.

"Public rallies are the fundamental liberty of citizens... so we should defend the Federal Constitution," he said.

He said the engagement he had mooted was to promote the coming together of all parties, including those in BN and in PR, and civil society groups, to move forward after the May 5 polls, taking note of the fact that the current government is a "minority government".

"The popular support for PR was most certainly much higher... from that point of view, all parties should be able to engage to see what is best for the people over the next five years.

"We must start working the ground and stop all the quarreling," he said.

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